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SECURITY LEAKS
BY DAVE GOELLER

Members of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, echoing the sentiments of two House subcommittee chairmen, urged the Reagan administration Tuesday to delay new regulations designed to plug leaks of classified information.

"What is troubling us is the broad scope, the broad sweep of this directive," Sen. Thomas Eagleton, D-Mo., told representatives from the Justice, Defense and State departments at the first Senate hearing on the six-month-old proposal.

Eagleton and Sens. Charles McC. Mathias, R-Md., and Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., took specific aim at a section of the plan that would affect what administration witnesses estimated to be more than 100,000 federal officials with access to secret Sensitive Compartmented Information.

Under the plan, those officials would have to sign a statement agreeing to pre-publication review of their writings _ either while in active service or after they leave the government.

"A broad interpretation of the president's directive would consign these thousands of men and women ... to a virtual vow of silence on some of the crucial issues facing our nation," Mathias said. "That silence could only be broken with the approval of the federal government."

Calling this a "chilling scenario," Mathias said the administration has been able to cite only one specific instance in the past five years when pre-publication review would have prevented release of classified information.

"Is such an extension of the (information security) system justified when there is such slender evidence?" said Mathias, who chaired the hearing.

"This is a very complex issue," Mathias said. "I would hope you would consider some delay in full implementation to give Congress a chance to comment."

This request, supported by Bingaman and Eagleton, came six days after a similar plea was made to the White House by Reps. Don Edwards, D-Calif., chairman of the Judiciary civil and constitutional rights subcommittee, and Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo., chairman of the civil service subcommittee of the Post Office and Civil Service Committee.

Defending the proposed directive, Richard K. Willard, a deputy assistant attorney general in the Justice Department's civil division, said that "unauthorized disclosures of classified information appear in the media with startling frequency."

He said the prepublication review plan would "not permit the government to censor material because it is embarrassing or critical."

Three former high-ranking officials had mixed views about the plan.

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